United Nations A/52/PV.11

General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is Her Excellency Ms. Zdenka Kramplová, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia. I give her the floor.

Ms. Kramplová (Slovakia): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his excellent work during the last session of the General Assembly.

The ongoing session of the General Assembly is crucial in terms of showing the capability of the United Nations to react adequately to changes in the global scene after the end of the cold war, mainly in connection with problems humankind faces on the eve of the new millennium. We all know that if the United Nations is to meet the expectations and needs of the new era, it must go through a process of reform. The Slovak Republic welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950) entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" and supports his endeavours to streamline the work of the Organization in order to achieve greater unity of purpose, strategic deployment of resources, coherence of efforts and flexibility in response.

The suggestions included in the Secretary-General's report reveal a firm determination to transform the United Nations into a centre which takes an active part in governing international relations, in accordance with its main principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Though one of the basic goals of the reform is to streamline the work of the Organization, along with cost-saving, the latter should not be the final goal of the reform, since this approach itself does not lead to the strengthening of the United Nations system. Any reform of the Organization which would lead to a weakening of its position is not acceptable.

The financing of the United Nations is necessarily an integral part of its reform, since continuation of the current financial crisis has a grave impact on the performance of the Organization. We believe the principle of honouring legal obligations — in this case, the payment of assessed contributions — should be a basis for any solution to be adopted, although we understand that a number of countries are in arrears to the Organization because their rates of assessment do not reflect their capacity to pay.

Slovakia belongs to a small group of countries — so-called good contributors — having paid its regular budget contributions in full and on time this year. With regard to our peacekeeping- budget assessment, the General Assembly decided to allocate Slovakia to group C of Member States for the period 1993 to 1996.

97-86056 (E)

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We continue to believe that there is no need to limit this decision strictly to such a short period. Speaking in terms of capacity to pay, Slovakia simply belongs to group C of the Member States. For this reason, the General Assembly should no longer postpone its decision on the permanent allocation of Slovakia to group C of the Member States for the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We expect that the General Assembly at its fifty-second session will take a decision confirming the permanent presence of Slovakia in this group. It was also on the understanding of the difficult financial situation of the United Nations that Slovakia, on the eve of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, paid in full its arrears to the peacekeeping budget for the period 1993-1996.

The maintenance of international peace and security remains one of the main priorities of the United Nations and peacekeeping operations are a key instrument available in this regard. As experience in recent years has shown, the ability to respond quickly with adequate mandate and means is a prerequisite to the successful completion of peacekeeping operations. The Slovak Republic fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to build up the United Nations standby arrangement system and to establish a rapidly deployable mission headquarters team. We are ready to participate actively in this system while considering the allocation of appropriate means.

Post-conflict peace-building is of crucial importance should a conflict resolution achieve lasting results. In recent years, the reconstruction of a conflict-torn society has involved a variety of actions. Many actors have been engaged in this process while lacking integrated coordination. Therefore, we welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to make the Department of Political Affairs the focal point for defining objectives, criteria and operational guidelines in this regard, as well as his intention to strengthen the role of a special representative of the Secretary-General to be responsible for the implementation of peace-building initiatives in the field. At the same time, in our view, it is still necessary clearly to define the competence, interaction and feedback between the Department of Political Affairs and the special representative of the Secretary-General.

The contribution of the Slovak Republic to the work of the United Nations rests first of all upon the concrete fulfilment of the primary purposes of the Organization, such as the maintenance of international peace and security. Slovakia has been currently contributing its troops and military observers to the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) in Eastern Slavonia and to the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) in Angola. It also takes active part in the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, of which it became a member in April this year, and thus contributes to the improvement of the planning and control system of United Nations peacekeeping operations. On this occasion, I can state with full responsibility that the Slovak Republic is interested in and is ready to continue contributing to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Experience has proven that small and mid-size States are capable of bearing their part of the responsibility for stability and security in individual world regions. In this connection, the Government of the Slovak Republic has decided to present its candidature for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2000-2001. We believe that the candidature of the Slovak Republic, which is not currently a member and has no representative in any of the principal United Nations organs, can win the support of the Member States in order to increase the representativeness and democratic nature of this body.

Along with the reform measures initiated and undertaken by the Secretary-General within his competence, a discussion of important issues that reside within the jurisdiction of Member States is under way. A number of stimulating as well as antagonistic opinions reflecting the complexity of the process have been formulated. The most evident example of this is the question of Security Council reform. It is in all our interests that the Security Council's composition and decision-making procedure reflect the significant changes that have taken place on the international political scene during the last three decades. The Security Council's reform should result in an enhancement of its legitimacy and representativeness, while maintaining its ability to react promptly.

In our view, a new geopolitical situation on the global scene should be reflected in a new concept of the Security Council. Apparently, a decisive part of the general membership is not ready for such a step and political circumstances have not sufficiently matured. At the same time, the efforts aimed at restructuring the Security Council within a predetermined timetable, even in the absence of a general agreement, might be counterproductive. Since Security Council reform is an extremely important and sensitive issue for the further

existence of the Organization, Slovakia prefers a continued and thorough discussion in this regard without an artificial acceleration of the whole process.

The change of priorities in international politics after the end of the cold war, in particular the utmost necessity to solve various socio-economic problems, seems to have shifted arms control and disarmament issues out of sight. Concerned about this negative trend, we feel that disarmament should again be given priority in the United Nations agenda.

Recently, the Slovak Republic, as a new member of the Conference on Disarmament, was honoured to chair that unique multilateral disarmament forum. We are convinced that the Conference on Disarmament must play a further, indispensable role in solving the most important issues of international security, stability, peace, arms control and disarmament.

Besides the opening of concrete negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for weapons and other explosive devices, we find especially important the question of a global and comprehensive ban of anti-personnel landmines. We understand the efforts to bring this issue to the Conference's agenda and the Ottawa process to be fully complementary. We highly appreciate the agreement on the text of the Ottawa convention reached recently in Oslo.

The Slovak Republic has been continuously engaged in a number of activities that contribute to the alleviation of the consequences of the use of anti-personnel landmines. Reflecting the provisions of the Ottawa convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, we would like to offer our assistance in mine-clearance programmes by putting at the United Nations disposal a mine-clearance unit that would follow up on the very successful performance of the Slovak Engineer Battalion in former Yugoslavia.

We welcomed with satisfaction the conclusions reached at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It is important that the technical and formal approach to the work of the Preparatory Committee has been altered, thus establishing favourable conditions for the success of the Review Conference.

The Slovak Republic, which uses nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, has supported all steps designed to lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. As one of the 44 countries needed to ensure the Convention's entry into force, the Slovak Republic is prepared to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) before the end of this year. I would also like to state that Slovakia has been honoured to chair the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization.

This year's entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention can undoubtedly be considered the most significant event in the field of disarmament. The Slovak Republic has been striving to strengthen the Convention through its active approach to the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We are proud to state that some of the Organization's inspectors were trained in facilities provided by the Slovak Republic. We are interested in continuing these activities in order to help the Organization fulfil its verification and preventive functions.

Support for economic and social progress is one of the basic missions of the United Nations. We welcome the creation of a new Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and we believe that this will lead to its further streamlining and efficient performance. The Organization is a unique forum that can facilitate close cooperation and partnership for development among Governments, civil society, the private sector and regional and global organizations.

The role of the Economic and Social Council, as set forth 50 years ago in the United Nations Charter, needs to be revised. In a time of changing social and economic-development philosophy, it is necessary to strengthen the policy-management and coordination roles of the Economic and Social Council, as well as its position in the macroeconomic-policy-coordination dialogue. The reform of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and the rationalization of their structure, work and functions require, in our opinion, a careful approach, one to be taken with full respect for their autonomy while aiming at their further rationalization and consolidation. The steps taken so far by the Secretary-General in this field are pointing in the right direction.

Slovakia, as a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, devoted considerable attention to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. Although the special session has not brought the expected results, we consider it an

important step in the global discussion on the strengthening of the principles of sustainable development.

We look forward with anticipation to the special session of the General Assembly on drugs. That session, which will be held next year, should yield concrete results with regard to combating the production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. As we all know, drugs pose a real threat, mainly to younger generations.

Since the Slovak Republic's establishment as an independent State, it has been participating actively in the work of one of the most important multilateral development bodies, namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Slovakia has been a member of the UNDP Executive Board since 1993. The UNDP regional centre for Central and Eastern Europe was established in the Slovak capital, Bratislava, in June of this year. The creation of this centre is a concrete example of the achievement of United Nations reform, in this instance of UNDP's efforts for decentralization at the country level and cutting the burden of administrative costs. The centre's foundation has been actively supported by Slovakia, and use has been made of my country's advantageous position as a bridge between UNDP secretariat activities at Headquarters in New York and UNDP efforts in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region. We are convinced that the presence of the UNDP regional centre in Bratislava will enable Slovakia to be even more active in development cooperation within the United Nations development group.

Human rights are a matter of the highest priority among the activities of the United Nations. Slovakia stresses the need for the consistent implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard we support the role of special rapporteurs appointed to selected countries where systematic human rights abuses occur. We acknowledge the results the special rapporteurs have achieved in this field.

The Slovak Republic supports the ambitious proposals for restructuring United Nations institutions dealing with human rights in order to create effective conditions for improved protection of human rights. In this connection, we consider it appropriate and necessary to harmonize the activities of the Commission on Human Rights with the work of the relevant expert committees established pursuant to international human rights treaties. At the same time, the Slovak Republic supports the creation of effective conditions for tripartite cooperation among Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

Human rights abuse has been the cause of a number of conflicts in many places on our planet, which are often followed by a humanitarian crisis on a massive scale. Women and children are the most fragile sectors of any afflicted population. We must not forget this fact while pursuing the purposes of the United Nations.

I believe that the United Nations reform process will be successfully completed in next few years. I find the Secretary-General's programme for reform to be an important step in this regard. The Slovak Republic is prepared to contribute to this process so that the United Nations can approach the next millennium as a modern, viable, global body with the adequate authority to fulfil the purposes embodied in the United Nations Charter.

Address by The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of Jamaica.

The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Patterson (Jamaica): Mr. President, your election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is a fitting and well-deserved result of your distinguished service for your country in the international community.

I also wish to convey our appreciation to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia for so ably directing the work of the fifty-first session, and to congratulate him for a job well done.

I join those who have spoken before me in welcoming the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan to this, his first General Assembly session since his assumption of office. Already he has impressed us with his sincerity of purpose and his willingness to take bold initiatives. He can always rely on Jamaica's full

cooperation and support as he seeks to steer the United Nations towards the new millennium.

Exactly 35 years ago, Jamaica became a Member of the United Nations by one of its first acts as a sovereign nation. We did so in recognition of the central role in the management of global affairs which only the United Nations can fill and from our desire to participate as an equal partner in that process. Ever since then, Jamaica has actively sought to contribute in a constructive spirit to the building and strengthening of the international system. One concrete result of these efforts is the location in Jamaica of an offshoot of the system, the International Seabed Authority, established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which is generally acknowledged to have been a signal achievement in extending the reach of international cooperation. We feel confident that the Authority will be able to discharge its mandate efficiently as a completely autonomous institution.

We are constantly reminded that we are approaching a new century and a new millennium. This new era provides exciting possibilities and, at the same time, poses formidable challenges. It requires of us a creative effort to find new directions and a continuing search for fresh solutions. The fluidity and changing currents in world affairs demand constant adaptation and adjustments to meet contemporary realities.

Some old disputes remain unresolved, and an array of new problems continues to enter the international agenda. The situation in the Middle East should not be allowed to remain forever a source of anxiety and frustration. The rise of ethnic violence and intercommunal conflict must be halted now.

Whatever cloud of uncertainty may hang over the future, we must not fail to lay the foundations of a more stable and equitable world order which fosters greater hope and wider opportunities for mankind.

As we seek to strengthen the fabric of international security, there needs to be a concentrated focus on the root causes of instability, conflict and confrontation everywhere. The danger signals are unmistakably clear. The coexistence of a world of wealth and prosperity and a world of poverty and misery is too profound a contradiction to be ignored. It lies at the heart of an emerging crisis. More than one billion human beings are still condemned to abject poverty. The despair and frustration which form their daily experience breed tension and trigger instability which are bound to erupt from time to time.

In a world where we note with increasing concern the absence of appropriate measures by multilateral financial institutions to relieve the burden of debt, we are bound to question whether the economic measures applied in the last few years represent the only way for developing countries to orient their economies. We cannot accept that the impoverishment of millions is a necessary cost of future world growth.

Globalization and liberalization, which have led to the breaking down of so many barriers between nations, are not removing the barriers between rich and poor. The process seems instead to be widening the differences and deepening the divide. The benefits of increased production and the expansion of global trade have been unevenly spread. Many developing countries are being increasingly marginalized in the process. Expected transfers of resources from increased trade and investment flows have not materialized, while the burden of debt remains a major constraint on development. Simply put, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

Unless we redress the imbalance — and quickly — the disparities will increase exponentially. To avert imminent disaster, there has to be a reversal of the pattern of transfer of technology and more liberal access to the markets of developed countries.

In all this, the United Nations has a decisive and strategic role to play. It should direct and channel international cooperation to correct distortions and inequities in the system, and contribute to the creation of an international economic environment facilitating economic growth and the benefits of development for all.

The new trading system is skewed in favour of the economically powerful. It is becoming more and more apparent that free trade, as practised by its loudest advocates, is not necessarily fair trade. For developing countries, access to larger markets remains difficult, owing to a variety of protective barriers. And where special and historical market arrangements for small producers still exist, these are now under threat from alliances of powerful governmental and private interests.

We developing countries cannot afford to shut ourselves off from what is taking place around us. The pace of change is at times bewildering, but we cannot say, "Stop the world, I want to get off". We must make use of the positive elements of modernity, organization of work and efficiency, to build the kind of society we wish

to leave to our children. The empowerment of all of the peoples of our countries is of paramount importance to the advancement of our societies.

Such empowerment requires that priority attention be given to human-resource development and human-capital formation, and to the optimal utilization of all the available human and natural resources of our time. Increasingly, where this has not already started, our programmes of education and training will have to be redesigned and refocused to enable our peoples to function effectively in the emerging knowledge-based world economy. Applications of science and technology and advances in telecommunications must become all-pervasive factors to be effectively and appropriately utilized for the benefit of our peoples.

Nothing would better fulfil the lofty ideals of our founding fathers than an immediate global assault on poverty, ignorance and disease. To win the battle, I call upon this Assembly to emphasize the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge in every corner of the Earth.

Liberalization and globalization, as they are being practised, have not shown the capacity or willingness to take into account the genuine interests or practical possibilities of small States. This is the painful lesson that we as Caribbean producers of bananas have learned. The recent panel ruling by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva on the European banana regime threatens to ruin the economies of the smaller States of the Caribbean, thereby endangering the economic stability of the entire region. It demonstrates not only the vulnerability of small economies, but also the extent to which we are at the mercy of those whose calculations seem oblivious to the interests of our survival.

Small economies operate under severe resource constraints and need to conserve the natural environment, which is a precious resource. That is why countries members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) attach special importance to international recognition of the peculiar circumstances and needs of small island developing States, as highlighted in the Barbados Programme of Action, which was adopted by the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

It is with great disappointment that we note how little progress has been made to implement the Programme of Action. There is a special need for financing arrangements to develop production capabilities, infrastructure and environmental protection programmes.

Small island States suffer other disadvantages. The Caribbean is renowned for its natural beauty, but it is also vulnerable to a range of frequent natural disasters. To the physical limitations in resources and economic scale have been added the hazards of nature.

Even as I speak, the people of the small island of Montserrat are struggling to maintain their existence in their own land, two thirds of which has been destroyed by a volcano that resumed activity just over two years ago. As a member of the Caribbean Community, Montserrat's plight is of grave concern to all CARICOM States. I speak on behalf of the Community in acknowledging the categorical commitment given by the administering Power, the United Kingdom, for both emergency assistance to Montserratians and for the sustainable development of that territory.

The costs of reconstruction are immense. Members of the Caribbean Community have offered constructive support to the recovery efforts. We believe that the international community should also respond in a humanitarian gesture of solidarity. I therefore take this opportunity to appeal to the General Assembly to demonstrate appropriate support for Montserrat through the adoption of tangible measures to assist in the rebuilding and sustainable development of that island. It is our hope and expectation that the membership of the United Nations will be able to devise a specific scheme of assistance for a small and courageous people.

We all look to the United Nations to help in emergencies, but above all, to be effective in keeping the peace. It should be ready to respond promptly to crises as they occur and to defuse tensions and conflict situations through preventive diplomacy. We believe the present time affords a significant opportunity for creating the framework to fulfil this role and for us to shape a rapid-response capability.

In recent years, a number of unilateral as well as multilateral measures have resulted in a more positive climate for international peace and security. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention have enhanced the prospects for real progress towards the goal of general and complete disarmament. We nevertheless acknowledge that more needs to be done in

the areas of arms regulation and disarmament, in respect especially of conventional weapons and the proliferation of small arms.

We welcome the steps being taken to prohibit the use of anti-personnel landmines, which should be regarded as a category of inhumane weapons that can no longer be allowed to cause the maiming and loss of life of civilians. We urge Member States to give full support to the Ottawa process for the conclusion of an international treaty to ban this category of weapons so that there can be universal obedience.

The threat to international peace and security can no longer be viewed in purely military and political terms.

Illicit trafficking in drugs poses a serious threat, as all too often we witness the pervasive and pernicious effects of the production and consumption of illicit drugs. The massive demand and the lure of profits from the trade have spawned a transnational network of criminals with considerable resources and influence. The activities of these groups are particularly threatening to small States such as those in the Caribbean, where the State apparatus is often stretched to deal with their coercive capability. Within the Caribbean Community we have taken these threats seriously and have committed significant resources to confronting them. Our geographical proximity to the major destination for the consumption of drugs makes the Caribbean particularly vulnerable as a transshipment point. We therefore view bilateral and regional cooperation as critical to combating drug smuggling.

An associated problem that is particularly dangerous for us is the smuggling of arms and weapons of destruction, which is a significant factor in spreading a cycle of crime and violence. CARICOM has pushed for a regional initiative to attack this problem. We look forward to hemisphere support, particularly in restricting illegal exports from the main areas of manufacturing and sale of small arms.

It is evident from all the forces at work that the imperatives of interdependence, the impact of globalization and the interlinkage in global problems require a renewal and strengthening of multilateralism. With the end of the cold war, we now have within our grasp the opportunity to establish a lasting framework for international cooperation and to build genuine partnerships that will guarantee a future that is secure for all. The challenges of the emerging world order are best addressed by multilateral approaches. Isolationism and unilateralism cannot be viable options, but multilateralism can thrive only if there are effective multilateral institutions.

The United Nations remains indispensable as the only universal mechanism capable of addressing issues of global impact and concern. But we must realize that the international society which the United Nations now serves is vastly different from the one in existence when the Organization was originally created. The reshaping of the United Nations therefore has to take into account new and complex international realities. Without compromising the fundamental objectives of the Charter, we need new rules and procedures to guide us.

Of special importance is the reform of the Security Council, in terms of both composition and mode of operation. The Council is a vital organ in the working of the United Nations. It is essential for its effectiveness that it command the confidence of the international community.

Jamaica supports an expansion of membership of the Council which will make it more representative of the international community. We advocate the adoption of procedures that will make it more democratic and transparent in decision-making. We recognize that there are important and delicate issues at stake and that we should proceed with care, but we have a concern that the process should not be mired in endless debate. We believe there is a sufficient consensus on proposals to form the basis for decisions soon.

We also acknowledge that more efficient management and more scope for effective initiative by the Secretary-General and his staff are essential to a strengthened United Nations structure. We support the Secretary-General in this endeavour.

Jamaica also endorses the need for measures to improve efficiency, and we have no quarrel with reform to streamline and rationalize the system. In welcoming these steps, we must however emphasize that reform is not synonymous with cost cutting. Reform is not about doing less; it is about doing better.

We would therefore wish to see a process that strengthens the capacity of the United Nations to deliver the services required by Member States as well as cement the linkages among the organs of the system while preserving comparative advantages, complementarities and synergies. The exercise must improve the capacity of the United Nations to take preventive action and respond

swiftly to crises. Above all, for small developing nations such as my own it is important that the Organization continue to play a leadership role in defining global development priorities.

Not all Member States will readily embrace the reform proposals that have been introduced, yet no one can deny the need for meaningful action to strengthen and improve the United Nations system. We must therefore seek to find common cause and summon the collective will to implement the measures that are necessary for its revitalization. It is our collective responsibility. Effective reform of our global institution requires broad agreement on the main features of the new global environment. We must clearly define the role the United Nations is expected to play in the next millennium. Our common vision must be one in which the United Nations can act as the catalyst for change and an instrument of progress on behalf of all peoples of the world.

Let us resolve to equip the United Nations with the necessary tools, including the requisite financial resources in accordance with Charter obligations, to enable it effectively to undertake its leadership role in safeguarding international peace and security in ensuring the economic and social well-being of mankind. It is our responsibility, and our peoples are looking for an institution energized to act effectively and swiftly to address the challenges that confront us as we approach the twenty-first century. Let us exploit the opportunity we now have to fashion a United Nations which reflects the hope and aspirations of all mankind for sustainable development, for lasting security and for enduring peace.

The new millennium beckons with its endless possibilities and challenges. Let not narrow self-interest prevent us from taking bold and decisive steps to meet these challenges. Jamaica and the Caribbean Community stand ready to play their part in a cooperative effort to attain global equity and prosperity. All of us owe it to ourselves and to succeeding generations.

I urge the international community wholeheartedly to embrace this venture in a genuine spirit of solidarity and harmony. History will not forgive us should we fail to do so.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Jamaica for the statement he has just made.

The Right Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Ferrero Costa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Mr. Ferrero Costa (Peru)(*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for me to take part in this General Assembly as the representative of the people and Government of Peru, under the leadership of President Alberto Fujimori. I extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this session and assure you of the fullest support by the delegation of Peru. We likewise congratulate Ambassador Razali Ismail, President of the previous session.

Peru reaffirms its unfailing dedication to the purposes, principles and norms enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, without whose faithful application it is not possible to achieve peace and harmonious coexistence among States. We must all ensure respect for international law, especially scrupulous and good-faith compliance with treaties, and must contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and participate in the promotion of economic and social development. Accordingly, effective observance of the Charter and respect for its principles are today more necessary than ever in order to endow multilateralism with renewed credibility and vigour. We live in a day of marked change in the organization of power and of globalizing trends in the international system which require, in keeping with the Charter, a scrupulous egalitarianism in relations between States and, accordingly, multilateral policies in keeping with the times as an appropriate means of conferring priority on the common goals of mankind in our era.

Institutional reform of the United Nations system is imperative to make it more efficient, adapt it to the present needs of the international community and consolidate institutions that will be truly representative of the interests we all share.

For four years now the General Assembly has been at work on the reform of the Security Council. National positions have already been made known and reiterated. We should now decide whether we shall embark on the negotiations proper or whether that should be deferred until better political conditions prevail, for the unproductive prolongation of this debate could affect the

prestige and authority of the Organization at a juncture when it is essential instead to strengthen it as the supreme world forum for dialogue, understanding and cooperation.

We are aware of the difficulty of this process. To those who have a duty to exercise their power with self-restraint we address an invitation to be flexible. We also believe that pressures or haste would be ill advised, since they could hinder the achievement of a legitimate and vital goal.

Peru believes it is necessary to make the Security Council representative, to enhance its legitimacy, to secure equitable geographical representation through its expansion, to give it greater transparency, and to take the first steps towards the abolition of the veto through strict limits on its use. Accordingly, Peru supports the increase of both categories of members. All of the foregoing should be achieved through a legitimate agreement that does not discriminate against developing countries.

To keep pace with the momentum generated by global problems, a new institutional structure is needed, such as that proposed by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his "A Programme for Reform." In order better to serve international peace and stability and the sustained growth of the world economy, renewed efforts are needed that will be in keeping with the diversity of Member States.

We support the strengthening of the Secretariat, the emphasis on the promotion of development and the recommendation for rationalizing and optimizing the use of its financial resources, as well as the transfer of the resources thus released to development cooperation activities.

The *Human Development Report* for 1977 reveals that the problem of internally displaced persons has taken on dramatic dimensions; the numbers increased fivefold during the decade 1984-1994. At the same time, we note in the report submitted by the representative of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights concerning institutional lacunae in this area of the United Nations that there is no institution with exclusive responsibility for such displaced persons.

We propose that at this session of the General Assembly, which the Secretary General has called the reform Assembly, the question of institutional responsibility for the internally displaced be addressed.

Peru favours the idea of unifying the country offices and operations of the agencies to facilitate the implementation of comprehensive programmes in which the United Nations system will be able to put its recognized capacities to full use.

No reform can be successful without the necessary financial resources. The financial situation of the Organization is a subject of widespread concern. Peru is of the view that contributions to the regular budget are a legal obligation that should be fully and promptly discharged. The principle of capacity to pay should remain the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of assessments. Accordingly, if States in arrears do not take concrete measures to clear their indebtedness, certainly without setting conditions, it will not be possible in a timely manner to earmark resources for activities essential to the majority of our countries. Such is the case, for example, with the campaign against poverty.

There are other key questions on our increasingly abundant international agenda. We must place increasing emphasis on economic and social issues, cooperation for development, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance, the advancement and defence of human rights and, of course, the fight against illegal drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption.

Peru approaches the development of the international system on the basis of four criteria that guide its foreign policy: the pre-eminence of representative democracy and the rule of law; the promotion of the fundamental rights of the human person; consolidation of the market economy and development of regional economic integration agreements; and the search for peace and the advancement of cooperation for development.

In the era of globalization, Peru views international peace and security as multidimensional tasks. If States are to assume them as real commitments and priorities, they must be associated with a higher purpose, namely, with improving the intolerable lot of some 60 per cent of the world's population.

Problems such as poverty, acute poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, infant mortality, discrimination and marginalization in general constitute a picture of potential social violence that threatens the universal ideal of a peaceful and orderly life. The plight of poverty and the challenge of promoting human development have radically altered the direction and pace of international relations.

The international system is tending towards a gradual demilitarization. With the end of the cold war and the reduced risk of a global military confrontation, conditions have been created to give priority, on the basis of dialogue and cooperation, to the long-delayed task of advancing economic and social development.

General and complete disarmament continues to be a key element in security and an abiding goal of the international community. Peru attaches special importance to non-proliferation in all its aspects, primarily nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. My country participated actively in the arduous negotiations that culminated in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and signed it on the day it was opened for signature.

We are gratified at the outcome of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, in the context of the Ottawa process to prohibit the production, transfer and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines, in which Peru has participated as a full member from the outset. We are preparing to sign the global agreement in December. The Rio Group has undertaken to make our region the first in the world to be free of these odious devices, which day after day continue to take their toll of thousands of innocent victims.

Peru is a peace-loving country that works for peace and repudiates conflict. We want to strengthen political and economic cooperation with all countries and groups of countries in various regions on the basis of common interests and mutual benefit. We emphasize especially the forging of closer ties of friendship and cooperation with neighbouring countries and fostering mutual trust through specific processes, mechanisms and measures that we are vigorously pursuing.

Without economic growth, there can be no creation of wealth or jobs, and without these there can be no development or prosperity. That is the great challenge of our time. We must act to create conditions of market transparency and social convergence in order to sustain the growth of the world economy, the opening and liberalization of trade, services and capital flows and the transfer of technology. Developed and developing countries must reach an understanding in order to avoid a return to that not-so-distant past when narrow forms of protectionism and conditionalities failed to overcome inequality and, indeed, aggravated it.

Globalization must not lead to greater poverty and discrimination, for they are one of the principal obstacles to stability, and, on the eve of the twenty-first century, they also pose a moral challenge. We must adopt measures to incorporate disadvantaged societies into policies and processes that promote economic growth and social development.

In Peru, the campaign for the gradual reduction of poverty until its eradication has taken a comprehensive approach. Its focal points are openness, modernization and liberalization of the economy, reform of the State and a legal framework that guarantees property and promotes investment. In addition, we are pursuing consistent sectoral policies, financed by 40 per cent of our national budget going to items in the social sphere, such as health, housing, education, population and justice. The results already achieved in economic and social growth are well known, and Peru is considered a stable, secure country with a bright future. Around the year 2000, the Peruvian Government hopes significantly to reduce acute poverty and poverty in general.

The United Nations has primary responsibility for addressing three negatives trends of universal scope: illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption. We are combating vigorously these criminal phenomena because they erode fundamental values and threaten the stability of democracies. The upcoming special session of the General Assembly on the question of drugs — a session that we fully support — calls for unity of purpose. The international community will have an excellent opportunity to tackle this problem in all of its dimensions. Peru has been achieving concrete results in all facets of this comprehensive campaign, not only in interdiction but also in crop eradication and alternative development. We hope to see a substantial increase in international cooperation that would help step up our anti-drug policy and would complement, even if only partially, the tremendous national efforts that we have been making. We hope that this enhanced cooperation will materialize, in view of the increased awareness and greater political will that have emerged worldwide regarding a problem for which all of us, without exception, share responsibility.

The Eighth International Anti-Corruption Conference, which took place three weeks ago in the capital of Peru, brought together more than 600 representatives from 93 countries. I wish to highlight the set of recommendations that emerged for combating public and private corruption. These are contained in the Lima Declaration, the first global document of its kind. It establishes an evaluation and follow-up mechanism that

will bring these recommendations to the attention of Governments and international institutions. The goal henceforth in this endeavour, which concerns Governments and citizens equally, will be to identify specific problem areas, taking into account public opinion and with the effective participation of civil society.

The United Nations, as the global framework for combating corruption in all its manifestations, must participate in these efforts, just as the inter-American system has been doing within its own geographical area.

The phenomenon of terrorism has, at the cost of countless innocent human lives and huge material losses, today placed itself on the agenda of contemporary international relations. We have already unequivocally and at all levels condemned terrorist acts and the criminal groups that perpetrate them, and we have also agreed that terrorist acts represent human rights violations. It is now time to undertake a process of consultation that will enable the international community to avail itself of universal legal instruments with which to combat effectively terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as we are striving to do on our continent.

Five years after the adoption of the plan of action of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the lack of progress on Agenda 21 is discouraging. There has been an erosion of the political commitment entered into, especially with respect to the allocation of new and additional resources, as well as scant willingness to transfer technology to the developing countries.

We reaffirm that only a comprehensive approach can lead to the achievement of sustainable development, because this requires a consolidation of the process of the opening and liberalization of trade, as well as commercial and environmental policies that are mutually supportive. An adequate transfer of financial resources and technologies to support national policies is also required. In this task, no State should shirk its individual responsibility.

One of the challenges facing the international community is to ensure the effective promotion and full observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The advancement and protection of human rights are central concerns of the Peruvian Government. The concept of human development, which underlies the entire economic and social policy of our State, focuses on a revalorization of life and of the human being. The cooperation of the United Nations is essential, through a realistic approach that takes due account of regional and national characteristics and that is geared primarily to achieving a culture of human rights.

Many countries, including Peru, are currently facing a cyclical, worldwide natural phenomenon known as El Niño, whose severe economic, environmental and social consequences are drastically changing the marine environment, which is a source of food and employment for broad sectors of humankind. The damage that these large-scale oceanic and atmospheric changes did in the past prompted my country some decades ago to promote the study of this phenomenon. Thus in 1974 a regional study of El Niño was carried out in the framework of the Permanent South Pacific Commission, a subregional organ of the South-East Pacific Action Plan, which has continued to address this problem with the valuable support of organizations such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the World Meteorological Organization.

The knowledge acquired by Peru and other countries, as well as by international, regional, and world bodies, needs to be integrated and systematized. Accordingly, Peru proposes the establishment of a global programme of integrated cooperation on the El Niño phenomenon, which would enable our countries to mitigate its effects and the ensuing material damage. In order to lay the foundations of this program and set it in motion, we should consider holding an international meeting with the participation of the relevant agencies of the system, regional organs and the respective national programmes of the countries concerned. In this context, we propose that, as part of the reform of the United Nations system, its operational capacity in the area of the monitoring and the mobilization of assistance for natural disasters be maintained and strengthened.

The development policy now being implemented in Peru is anchored in the universal concepts, values and principles propounded by the United Nations: democracy, economic freedom, respect for the fundamental rights of the human person, environmental conservation, the advancement of women and protection of the rights of indigenous populations.

Responding to the dictates of its history and geography, Peruvian society has since ancient times embodied the ideal of unity within diversity. We Peruvians are laying the foundations of our own future. I shall not dwell on the policies that we have been pursuing for the last seven years, their impressive results

or the vicissitudes in this process that have tested our resolve and perseverance. But I feel that it is appropriate to repeat the principal characteristic of our development model, which is a harmonious and rational complementary relationship between economic and social policies, which for the first time in many years is enabling us to carry out a realistic strategy for sustainable human development. Accordingly, the modern and efficient functioning of the United Nations system of cooperation is now, more than ever, of strategic value to Peru. I should like in particular to express thanks for the cooperation that the United Nations system has been providing to the Peruvian people, which is stimulating and complementing our national effort.

The United Nations is the best instrument available at a global level to consolidate international peace and security, respect for the sovereignty and independence of States and international law, and for the promotion of economic and social development. Accordingly, its operations, approaches and strategies should provide effective answers to the challenges of the contemporary world and the needs of our peoples, who continue to place their hopes in our Organization. Peru will always remain committed to that endeavour.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Croatia, His Excellency Mr. Mate Granić.

Mr. Granić (Croatia): It is a special privilege and honour for me to address the General Assembly at the beginning of its fifty-second session.

At the outset I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, as the new President of the General Assembly, confident that your extensive and proven diplomatic experience and skills will play an important role in the work of the Assembly.

I should also like to express our gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, whose devoted and vigorous work has shown that United Nations reform is much more than mere rhetoric, and who set a new standard of performance in the General Assembly.

As a Central European and Mediterranean country, Croatia highlights as its strategic priorities overall stability in the region, full integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions and the assertion of its position in the new post-cold-war Europe. Hence the special attention my Government pays to the policy of good neighbourliness and the development of stable relations with all neighbouring countries, based on the principles of full respect for the existing internationally recognized borders, for minority rights and for the peaceful resolution of existing and possible disputes in the spirit of the United Nations Charter. Today I can point out with satisfaction that Croatia has concluded dozens of bilateral agreements with its neighbours, and relations with each of our immediate neighbours are being fully regulated and are steadily improving.

Croatia hosted two large-scale United Nations peace operations: the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO). The United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES), in the Danubian area, and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) are still present. Croatia has also played an important role in facilitating the Stabilization Force (SFOR) operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's sincere gratitude for all the efforts that were made by the United Nations to stop the war in Croatia and alleviate its consequences, as well as to express my country's sincere sympathies to the families of the "blue helmets" who have fallen while attending to their lofty duties.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his peace efforts in Croatia. As a United Nations official in the field and as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations he made a major personal contribution to overcoming the crisis. Our great thanks go to UNTAES and Mr. Jacques Klein, until recently Transitional Administrator in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, whose vigorous work, leadership skill and successful cooperation with the Croatian Government have been instrumental in the peaceful reintegration of these areas into Croatia.

During the many months of the United Nations presence in Croatia and elsewhere in the area of the former Yugoslavia, my country had a chance to see for itself all the potential and the weaknesses of peacekeeping operations. It has been proven beyond any doubt that a peace operation can be successful only if its mandate is clearly defined, in terms of its goal as well as its time-frame, and if it is actively and fully supported by the

Security Council and the Secretary-General, and spearheaded by an uncompromising leadership explicitly determined to use all means required for the completion of its mission.

This knowledge has been gained at a high political, material and, worst of all, human price, so it is to be hoped that it will be wisely exploited in the future. For its part, Croatia is anxious to step out of its role as a country hosting peacekeeping operations and instead assume the role of an active participant in such operations elsewhere. Here and now I can confirm the readiness of my country to join the roster of United Nations Member States whose troops participate in international peace endeavours.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place against a background of great obligations and equally great expectations regarding the reform of the United Nations system. The timely and far-reaching proposals put forward by the Secretary-General have opened the door for reforms. Croatia gives its firm support to his proposals, and we are ready to render any assistance needed in introducing the kind of changes we owe both to those who laid the foundations of this Organization and to future generations. As for the need to rationalize the work of the General Assembly and reduce its huge agenda, Croatia has put forward a proposal to delete the item on the General Assembly's agenda entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Croatia", as its title and topic no longer correspond to the situation on the ground, which makes it obsolete.

In view of the geopolitical realities, Croatia advocates an increase in the number of Security Council members, both permanent and non-permanent. Half a century of old stereotypes ought to be phased out. Croatia supports the idea of granting permanent member status to Germany and Japan, with the right to permanent membership being kept in mind for those parts of the world, primarily Africa, which for more than 50 years, without any justification, have been deprived of permanent Security Council representation. Furthermore, my country supports the idea of assigning one more seat on the Security Council to the Eastern European Group.

Croatia strongly supports the reaffirmation and full implementation of the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). My country was pleased to note that during this year's NPT Preparatory Committee sessions some progress was achieved with regard to the principle of non-first use, especially against non-nuclear-weapon States, and it calls on the nuclear States to give due consideration to proposals to have this principle codified in a legally binding document.

In May 1996, the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects amended Protocol II on landmines. Croatia, which has played an active role during the Ottawa process from the beginning, and which has already put in place its own unilateral moratorium on landmines, fully supports all the efforts which ultimately led to the decision at the recent Oslo conference to adopt the text of a global treaty banning anti-personnel landmines.

Croatia's preoccupation with the global landmine problem is also motivated by personal affliction. Millions of mines laid in the formerly occupied territories of Croatia during the war continue to pose a direct threat, especially to the most vulnerable: civilians. It is also a great impediment to the reconstruction of war-affected areas. The clearing of mines in these areas is a painstaking process, and, in spite of our best efforts, it will take many years to complete. Unfortunately, a lack of specialized equipment means that the process cannot move any faster. Having said this, allow me to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who have thus far provided financial and other aid towards alleviating the landmine problem in my country, and to make a further appeal for any aid — material, financial or professional — which could help us expedite the mine-clearing process. In this context, I would like to express my Government's appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Centre in Zagreb and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for their efforts in helping us launch this process.

Quality of life, today and in the future, will greatly depend on success in the protection of human rights it both international and national levels. Protection and promotion of human rights — a cause in which the United Nations has played an indispensable role — is necessary in order to guarantee international stability and security. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has successfully enhanced the role of the United Nations in this important field and, at this juncture, I would like, on behalf of the Croatian Government, to congratulate Mrs. Mary Robinson upon her appointment to this post. Because of her excellent

qualifications and personal integrity, we are confident that she will perform her duties admirably.

Mr. Kamara (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Croatia's own human rights situation should be evaluated in the context of the exceptional circumstances of its recent history. Despite the trying circumstances of its inception, the Republic of Croatia has managed to build the foundations of a democratic society based on respect for human rights. In this regard, I can announce that in the coming month of October Croatia will ratify the European Convention on Human Rights. There are, of course, many outstanding issues, largely stemming from the war of aggression waged against Croatia. These include the return of displaced persons and refugees; identification of missing persons; the rights of ethnic Croats in neighbouring States; and the return of all Croatian Serbs who left Croatia at the instigation and under the orders of their leaders and who wish to return to Croatia. The Government of the Republic of Croatia intends to continue to deal with all these issues in keeping with its international human rights obligations as well as its legitimate concerns for the security of the State and the safety and welfare of all its citizens.

As a victim of aggression, Croatia advocates the need — and has even come up with its own initiatives — to set up an international tribunal for the prosecution of war crimes committed in Croatia and Bosnian and Herzegovina. Croatia has been cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia since its foundation. The Tribunal's Office has opened in Zagreb. The Croatian Government has established its own Office for Cooperation with the Tribunal and appointed observers to the Tribunal. Moreover, the Constitutional Law on Cooperation with the International Tribunal has been adopted. Croatia's principled position is to cooperate with the Tribunal within its obligations as defined in international law and in accordance with the relevant resolutions and the statute of the Tribunal adopted by the Security Council.

However, Croatia cannot be completely satisfied with the work of the Hague Tribunal to date. The charges raised so far, and the ethnic composition of the persons being tried in The Hague at present, do not properly reflect the responsibility of the sides involved in the conflict or the extent of the war crimes committed. On the other hand, by trying to subpoena the States and their high officials, the Tribunal has gone beyond its own statute and international law.

Current peace operations in the territory of Croatia — UNTAES and UNMOP — are considered successful by my Government. Under the Basic Agreement signed between the central authorities of the Republic of Croatia and the Serbs from the Croatian Danubian region, and pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions, the two-year UNTAES mandate expires on 15 January 1998. Croatia holds that at this moment there are no reasons whatsoever for any prolongation of the UNTAES mandate beyond 15 January 1998. We are also firmly convinced that this mission will be fully completed on time and will go down in history as one of the most successful United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The results achieved under the auspices of the United Nations and with the full cooperation of the Croatian authorities can be described as highly satisfactory. Demobilization has been completed. Local elections have been held through which the Croatian Danubian region has been reintegrated into the legal and political system of the country. Local Government has largely been transferred to the newly elected and constituted bodies.

Rules have been defined and designed in cooperation between the Republic of Croatia, UNTAES and UNHCR to enable a dignified, safe and organized return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes in and out of the Croatian Danubian region. So far a total of 1,500 displaced Croats have returned to the Croatian Danubian region, and a total of 8,000 Serbs have returned from the region to their homes elsewhere in Croatia. The return of displaced persons and the international presence will continue after the departure of UNTAES. At the invitation of the Croatian authorities, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has undertaken to monitor the developments in the Croatian Danubian region after 15 January 1998.

The reintegration of the Croatian Danubian region has never been an easy or simple process. The Republic of Croatia and all its citizens, especially the population of the Croatian Danubian region, including the persons expelled from it, owe a debt of gratitude to UNTAES and all the States whose troops have participated in this highly successful operation.

The mandate of UNMOP, which has been given the task of monitoring the demilitarization of the area from both sides of the southernmost border between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia, has been helpful in stabilizing security in that area and in creating conditions for a lasting settlement there through bilateral talks. The Republic of Croatia has shown full understanding for the interests of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with regard to the security of the Boka Kotorska Bay, while being concerned for its own security in the Dubrovnik hinterland. In this regard, UNMOP has played an important role, but it will not be possible to deal with the outstanding problems through endless prolongations of the United Nations mandate.

With relief and satisfaction, Croatia welcomes the easing of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and remains firmly committed to the principles and implementation of the Washington and Dayton Accords. My Government gives its active support to preserving the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to the consolidation of the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a foothold and framework for the survival and well-being of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The role of the international community, especially that of the United Nations and the countries participating in SFOR, in the creation of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is irreplaceable at this stage of the peace process. Too much effort, resources and prestige have been invested in peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and too much suffering has been experienced by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to allow any risk which may undermine what has been achieved in Dayton and in its wake. Croatia will persist and persevere in its role as an active peace agent in the region, expecting other parties involved in the peace process to fulfil their obligations.

Those standing in the way of the Dayton Accords and continuing to defy the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a community of two equal entities and three constituent peoples have to be confronted with the same uncompromising determination of the international community, and, if required, with the same measures as were earlier applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which proved to be entirely necessary and productive. The economic reconstruction of the country — in which the international community should play an even more vital role — is also of special importance.

The agenda of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is extensive, and a great deal of work lies ahead of us. There is also an opportunity before us to have this session of the General Assembly recorded in the annals of the Organization as a landmark in the Organization's development. Croatia will be only too glad to help make this come true.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker on my list is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, on whom I now call.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I warmly congratulate Minister Udovenko on his election to the helm of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His profound experience in international affairs is the best guarantee for the success of his mandate. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who led the fifty-first session of the General Assembly with great distinction.

On all the broad issues confronting the General Assembly, Italy supports the statement made on Tuesday by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

Today we have a historic opportunity to connect principles and reality, give life to our ideals and shape this Organization for decades to come. The ideologies that divided humankind in this century have crumbled. Meanwhile, the system engineered with such foresight by the founding Members amidst the horrors of the most devastating war the world has ever seen has maintained and increased its significance.

We no longer live in a world of purely national interests. More and more, policy-making is informed by global concerns such as human rights, solidarity and social justice. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, let us pledge to settle religious and ethnic conflicts through dialogue, tolerance and cultural exchange, and to find collective answers to international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and the degradation of the environment. We can join forces to eradicate poverty, which is a major cause of social injustice and political turmoil in the world, and guarantee dignity, respect and better living standards for every human being.

The goals of a new world order, founded on mutual trust and the rejection of the threat and use of force, are peace, security, sustainable development and respect for the fundamental freedoms of the individual. But these values cannot be dictated by an elite group of States. The future of humankind is the responsibility of the international community as a whole.

As the United Nations prepares to meet the challenges of the third millennium, the General Assembly has a role of paramount importance to play.

At the opening of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly there was unanimous consensus on the need for a far-reaching reform of the United Nations system. In my address I stated that if the United Nations was to respond effectively to the growing concerns that had emerged, reform could no longer be postponed. The international community requires higher standards of security, development and democracy, and it needs them now.

On that occasion, I listed 10 specific proposals to make United Nations peacekeeping operations more effective, and I am glad to see that progress has been made on some of them. Procedures for periodic meetings between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries have been consolidated. To help the Organization respond to crises where and when they arise, Italy recently became the sixth country to formalize its participation in standby arrangements for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

President Clinton said in his speech on Monday that the first task of the United Nations must remain the pursuit of peace and security. When a situation of serious instability developed in Albania last March, the Security Council — with the full support of the Secretary-General — acted promptly, authorizing a coalition of the countries, led by Italy, willing to form a Multinational Protection Force. During the four months of its mandate, Operation Alba enabled the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, created a secure environment for the missions of international organizations, and made democratic elections possible. In short, it helped put the country back on its feet. One of the keys to its success was an innovative approach to peacekeeping, involving the rapid planning and deployment of the Force, and close coordination among the participating countries and the host country, under the constant monitoring of the United Nations.

To consolidate the gains that have been made and lay the foundations for Albania's growth and prosperity, the next step is to rehabilitate the State institutions and economy. With this in mind, the Italian Government has convened a ministerial conference for October, in Rome, with the participation of the Albanian Government and all the relevant international organizations to assess needs and decide on a common course of action.

For over half a century, the United Nations has been seeking to establish a permanent international criminal court to prosecute and punish genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, wherever and by whomever they are committed. This is a test of our collective responsibility, made even more pressing by the terrible massacres that have characterized recent ethnic conflicts, and Italy confirms its strong support, pledges its active contribution to this endeavour, and is prepared to host in Rome the diplomatic conference to adopt the statute for the international criminal court.

A second major challenge is arms control. Before dealing with the security requirements of tomorrow, we must stop living by the fears of yesterday. New standards of security can be produced only through international cooperation under the leadership of the United Nations.

Italy has some of the world's strictest and most advanced legislation on the export of arms. I am proud to report that this past June the Italian Government unilaterally decided to renounce the production, export, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines, and enabling legislation to this effect has already been passed by one branch of our Parliament. But the full value of this commitment can only be realized if it is shared by all countries, whether or not they are parties to the Ottawa process. The recent Oslo conference, to be sure, made remarkable accomplishments, but they are not yet universal. To achieve this goal, our efforts should be complemented by the continuing involvement of the Conference on Disarmament.

Two months ago, Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented a package of ground-breaking proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Organization and enhance its ability to meet the new challenges. Those proposals deserve our full support.

One important goal of the Secretary General's reform plan is to energize the strategic direction provided by the General Assembly. To this end, we need to streamline the agenda and identify priorities for consideration in the short- and medium-term. Since the time available for plenary debates is limited, we should focus on matters of general interest.

The reform of the Organization is a question of the highest priority for the current session of the General Assembly, as the Secretary-General himself has underlined. In the coming months, two other major subjects also command our attention: the financial

situation of the Organization, and the structure and composition of the Security Council.

To function properly, the Organization has to be able to rely on adequate resources. Assessed contributions must be paid in full, on time and without conditions by Member States. Italy, for its part, has always complied with this fundamental rule. Nevertheless, we believe that the time has come to agree on a realistic new scale of assessments, based on Member States' capacity to pay and making the Organization less dependent on the contributions of a single country.

However, let there be no confusion about our support for a review of the scale of assessments. There can be absolutely no link between Members' contributions and Security Council reform, lest the impression be created that permanent seats are up for sale.

This brings me to the reform of the Security Council. There is broad agreement that reform is needed to bring the Council more in line with the new realities of the world in which we live. The reform must be inspired by the principles of democracy, equitable geographical representation and transparency. These are the very principles guiding the proposal presented by Italy. While we are prepared to look constructively at other proposals, we must guard against those advocating a system that would divide Member States into four categories: first-class countries — the five current permanent members of the Security Council, with veto power; second-class countries — the new permanent members from industrialized nations, without veto power; third-class countries — "pseudo-permanent" rotating members, without veto power, from developing nations in different regions; and fourth-class countries — the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States, with fewer chances than ever of serving on the Security Council.

Such stratification of membership, reminiscent of the caste system in ancient empires, would defy the fundamental principles of logic and democracy, and marginalize some of the countries most active in the Organization. How could any of us accept relegation to the last of these categories and go back to our people and Parliaments and tell them that we actually voted in favour of our country's demotion to fourth-class status? Let me stress that this type of problem would not be generated by the Italian proposal, which calls for an increase only in non-permanent members, to be democratically elected by the General Assembly.

Another aspect of reform is the question of the veto. This cannot and should not be discussed independently of the issue of enlarging the Council. The two issues are inseparable. Indeed, every aspect of Security Council reform should be addressed at the same time and in the same context. Before determining the future size of the Council and the names of new members, we must define the criteria that should govern the reform. Ad hoc approaches will not work. Ultimately, no solution can be adopted unless there is broad consensus. And a lasting and equitable outcome cannot be reached through hasty and partial solutions. Forcing the issue would deepen divisions and jeopardize the larger and more urgent question before the General Assembly: approving the Secretary-General's reform package.

In a longer-term perspective, I would like to add that a fact-finding inquiry recently conducted by the Italian Parliament envisaged a permanent seat on the Security Council for the European Union, as a natural evolution of its common foreign and security policy.

Almost 55 years ago, on November 13 1942, President Roosevelt said that the future of the United Nations association

> "should not be restricted to the 28 signatories of the Atlantic Charter, but should be one which all nations could join."

President Roosevelt believed that the purpose of the United Nations should not be the defence of the status quo and that its strength did not lie in sheer numbers, but in the way that Member States engaged in collective deliberations and action. This vision should guide our pursuit of a more promising future for all the people of this world. History will not be lenient with us if we fail.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Adrian Severin.

Mr. Severin (Romania) *(interpretation from French)*: At the outset, I would like to extend to Mr. Udovenko our most sincere congratulations on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, as a representative both of a neighbourly and friendly country and of a region that has significantly increased its presence in the United Nations family in recent years. At such a decisive moment for the future of our Organization, he has a

mandate of high responsibility and I offer him our full support.

It is a great honour for me to address, for the first time, this prestigious forum, with its wide participation and global vocation, in my capacity as the representative of a coalition Government that arose 10 months ago in a democratic transition of power. From the outset, I would assure the Assembly that the new Romanian Government, in its strategy of consolidating the rule of law and a free-market economy, means to cooperate with and rely on the United Nations and its specialized agencies. We are interested in making the Organization capable of reacting more rapidly and efficiently to the current needs of Member States and to the new global challenges at this twilight of the millennium.

A few weeks ago, the Romanian Government, with support from the United Nations Development Programme, convened in Bucharest the third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. The Conference focused on the link between democracy and human centred development, both as a subject and as the target of political action, a theme of great interest that is currently enjoying top priority on the United Nations agenda.

In my capacity as Acting President of the Conference, I have the honour to submit to the Assembly's attention the document containing its proceedings and results. Government representatives from 77 States and, for the first time, non-governmental actors of civil societies, along with 14 international organizations, examined in a constructive and positive manner the current status and future issues of the process of consolidating their democratic systems and adopted by consensus a review and a set of recommendations, distributed as an official document of the General Assembly at this session.

These recommendations spell out the need for good governance and for broad participation by civil society in the democratic exercise, as well as for strengthening democratic institutions in order to face the challenges generated by globalization, corruption and organized crime. At the same time, Romania believes that it is of the utmost importance to ensure the continuity of the Bucharest Conference's efforts and its practical consequences. That is why, in keeping with the recommendations advanced in Bucharest, we suggest that a follow-up mechanism be established for the consolidation process of new or restored democracies.

We plan to continue consultations with the Secretary-General and with interested States and international organizations on these themes and on the proposal to convene a summit of the new or restored democracies in the year 2000.

I am confident that the results of the Bucharest Conference will act as points of reference in the debates of the current session. We shall work for the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution reaffirming the support of the United Nations system for the efforts of Governments to consolidate the new or restored democracies.

In line with the collective commitment we made at the United Nations fiftieth anniversary ceremonies, we are among those who believe that the strengthening of the Organization's capacity to respond adequately to the new needs and challenges of the twenty-first century is of highest priority. It is in the interests of our Organization to achieve, even at this session, realistic and balanced results, of mutual interest and the widest possible benefit, to enhance its credibility and viability. We welcome the Secretary-General's report on a programme for reform and we assure him of our confidence and support in achieving its objectives.

We associate ourselves with the European Union's position. Indeed, reform should be not a cost-cutting exercise, but rather a matter of strengthening the Organization's role as an active and efficient world forum. Our objective is to make the United Nations more efficient, more transparent, more responsible and, last but not least, more credible.

We also believe that the dividends obtained through better financial and personnel management — the so-called "dividends of reform" — should be reallocated to development activities for the developing countries. It is in this spirit that the delegation of Romania will take part in the reform process and cooperate with all interested delegations in identifying solutions enabling the General Assembly to reach a general agreement on a coherent and constructive response to the Secretary-General's proposals.

We have the opportunity today to live in a world awakened from the cold-war nightmare that divided us irreconcilably into friends and enemies, a world of communications and interaction in which closed societies cannot survive. Increasing globalization should help us to know each other better and bring us closer together to

build common projects. We are even invited to rethink our global society, the relations among us and the direction of our political actions. A new political philosophy, the philosophy of partnership, asserts itself in the context of relations between States, whereby what a country gains is added to and not deducted from its partner's benefit.

This philosophy was promoted in the last half century in European and Euro-Atlantic structures, with acknowledged positive results in the field of stability and cooperation on the continent. This is also why Central and Eastern European countries are naturally keen to integrate themselves into such structures.

That is also the philosophy Romania uses as a basis in developing a solidarity and cooperation policy at the subregional, regional and international levels aimed at consolidating and activating stability in its geographic region and throughout the world. We have tried fully to normalize relations with our neighbours, and we have proposed trilateral cooperation plans to our partners in the region. At the same time, we launched the idea of reviving the traditional commercial routes to Northern Europe and Central Asia. The same concept of building a network of communication and mutually beneficial cooperation is the basis for the development of economic cooperation in the Black Sea region and for our involvement in the Central European Initiative, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative and so forth.

The participation of Romania in the United Nations peacekeeping Mission in Angola, in the stabilization efforts of operation Alba in Albania and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), are testimony to our political willingness to act as a stabilization factor. At the same time, I would like to point out that Romania is ready to increase its contribution to the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and to contribute to other similar actions, such as the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other forces that remain necessary in that area.

All these efforts to establish an environment of confidence and cooperation that generates peace and security in Central and South-East Europe, as well as in some hot spots of the world, reveal not only a new approach, but also a new stage that Romania is passing through on its way from totalitarianism to democracy. In the current "post-transition" phase, the results achieved in the democratic processes and economic reform, which have been recognized by the international community and financial institutions, qualify Romania legitimately to play a clearer and more active role in defining and designing common projects of security and progress in the region and in the world, including within the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

I would like to make a few remarks on some other important items on the agenda.

From the experience we have gained in our region and in neighbouring regions — Central and South-East Europe, the Middle East and the Caucasus — it can be concluded that poverty, the absence or weakness of institutions that are characteristic of the modern democratic State and distrust are among the causes of crises and conflict situations. Specific steps by the United Nations system and the entire international community are required to eradicate poverty. They should be aimed at supporting the countries of the region that are confronted with this phenomenon so that they can increase their production through the adequate use of their own specific resources and economic capabilities. Hampering such a process can have only negative consequences in the field of security and stability.

With regard to strengthening institutions that are part of a State based on the rule of law, it is necessary to create, alongside rapid-reaction forces for peacekeeping, a so-called civilian rapid-reaction force to support the establishment of institutions capable of maintaining State order and coherence in an open and free society.

Building up confidence involves dialogue and communication, as well as the elimination of any form of isolation. The United Nations should be efficiently involved in the dismantlement of terrorist infrastructures all over the world. At the same time, it is necessary to give up rhetoric and spectacular gestures in favour of direct negotiations between the interested parties, in a quiet and discreet atmosphere.

We would like to point out the importance Romania attaches to dialogue conducive to solutions negotiated by the parties directly involved, be it in the Middle East, Cyprus or the former Yugoslavia. It is our firm belief, particularly since our latest political contacts in the Middle East and in Bucharest, that the resumption of negotiations between the interested parties, based on the principles agreed in the Madrid and Oslo accords, is the

only way to achieve an equitable and lasting peace in the region.

We welcome and support the recent United States initiative, as well as the efforts of other countries, to unblock the peace process. We also welcome the direct negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, between the two communities of Cyprus with a view to an equitable and lasting solution to the Cyprus issue, and we express our willingness to take part in the peacekeeping operation in that country.

As main guarantor of peace and international security, the United Nations should play an active role in crisis prevention and management, using preventive diplomacy and, when necessary, peacekeeping operations. Romania will support such United Nations actions and intends to diversify its contribution by including civilian components in its contributions.

In the field of arms control and disarmament, we consider that the United Nations can and should set an example of change in concept and approach that go beyond the vestiges of the bloc mentality and lead to arms control and disarmament solutions capable of ensuring global security, with the existence of several centres of economic and cultural power. We attach special importance to nuclear non-proliferation issues, including the negotiation of a treaty to ban the production of fissionable materials for military purposes, the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United Nations Register of Conventional arms and the processes aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines.

The debates on economic and social issues should create the foundations for the necessary relaunching of the North-South dialogue on development, as such issues have been largely ignored in the context of the political developments subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the cold war or on matters linked to the expansion of NATO and the European Union. Our debates will have to take into account the recent trends in world economy — such as high rates of growth, far exceeding those of gross world product achieved by world trade; transportation; and the volume of direct investment and international financial transactions — and the necessity of ensuring a wider access of goods produced in developing countries to the developed countries' markets and enhanced cooperation on third markets. All these elements call for a conceptual reconsideration of the development process that gives due attention to the social component and ensures the participation of the main actors: Governments, private sectors, transnational corporations and civil society. In this respect, we suggest that thought be given to the idea of setting up a social solidarity fund to help disadvantaged persons and support the integration of unemployed and marginalized persons into productive activities.

The Romanian economy has reached macroeconomic stability, by decreasing the inflation rate and the budgetary deficit, and started structural reform, in particular in the agricultural sector. Consistent efforts are being made to speed up privatization and attract foreign investors. With all this going on, we are interested in participating in a debate that can highlight measures envisaged by Governments for what the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund recently called "second generation reform", which will focus on microeconomics and social protection policies.

We believe that development assistance requires new and increased mobilization from the international community, and we favour enhanced coherence in the country programmes undertaken by United Nations bodies and funds, and more efficient use of resources allocated for development.

In view of the new threats facing our societies and institutions, we support measures aimed at strengthening the capacity of the United Nations in international drug control and the fight against corruption and organized crime. We welcome the establishment in Vienna of a single Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, as well as the convening, in 1998, of a special session of the General Assembly on drug control. Furthermore, we propose consideration of the United Nations declaring an international year for the fight against corruption and organized crime. This major issue could also be the subject of a special high-level segment of the General Assembly. Our objective is to elaborate and put into practice international cooperation instruments that enable us to work together to protect ourselves and eradicate these scourges.

We shall soon begin preparations for celebrating, in 1998, the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us take this opportunity to reaffirm our firm commitment to the universality of all human rights, whose promotion and protection should always remain a priority for the United Nations. We support the measures envisaged by the Secretary-General to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and we welcome the

appointment of the former Irish President, Mrs. Mary Robinson, as High Commissioner.

With regard to administrative and budgetary questions, the Romanian delegation is in favour of the Secretary-General's proposals for the regular budget for the 1998-1999 biennium, with the understanding that the reductions will not affect the future capacity of the Organization to fulfil its mandate. We support the efforts to improve the Organization's financial situation and place it on a sound and predictable footing. It is particularly important that, through open and constructive negotiations, we achieve feasible solutions with regard to the future payments of arrears and a new scale of assessments for the regular and peacekeeping budgets, thus reflecting the new realities and real capacity to pay of each State.

Finally, I assure the Assembly, once again, of the full cooperation of the Romanian delegation in our joint efforts to strengthen and enhance the efficiency of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to extend to the President and to the members of the General Committee, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, our congratulations on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His experience and diplomatic skills will undoubtedly contribute to the success of its work. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, who conducted the work of the previous session with distinction.

I take this opportunity also to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan on his election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. We are confident that his vast experience in international affairs and his competence and expertise will strengthen the role of the Organization in achieving international peace and security. I am also pleased to express, once again, our deep appreciation to the previous Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose efforts had a positive and concrete impact on the progress of the work of the world Organization.

The present session is of special importance because of the major changes taking place on the world scene and the attendant far-reaching developments and transitions in the political, economic, social and environmental fields. Despite the state of openness that has characterized international relations, the success achieved in resolving some conflicts and the emergence of indications of relative improvement in the growth of the world economy, we are still facing new types of challenges. The most serious of these are reflected in racial, ideological, and ethnic conflicts and civil wars; the aggravation of poverty situations; human rights violations; violence; terrorism; and drugs. All of these have a negative effect on national security, the sovereignty of States and economic and social development. These challenges require cooperation and coordination between States at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

The important role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in dealing with these new developments as a whole is now the major incentive for consolidating its permanence, supporting its objectives and upholding its Charter. This means that, more than ever before, we must provide it with the political, financial and moral support that will enable it to respond appropriately and promptly to emerging global needs.

Having studied the report of the Secretary-General on the reform and renewal of the United Nations, the delegation of the United Arab Emirates welcomes in principle its recommendations and proposals aimed at strengthening and developing the work of the Organization and adapting it to the realities of the present-day world. At the same time, however, we wish to stress the importance of having the reforms reflect the aspirations of the countries of the world, particularly the developing countries, in achieving sustainable development and in promoting peace and security, stability and growth.

We also support the international efforts aimed at enlarging and restructuring the Security Council and improving its rules of procedure with a view to ensuring equitable geographical representation and equality among States, achieving transparency and objectivity in the adoption of its resolutions and the follow-up to their implementation, and preventing double standards, which have proved to be too dangerous in many issues of peace and security. In addition, we support all proposals calling for the strengthening of cooperation and coordination between the General Assembly, the Security Council and

the Economic and Social Council and for widening the circle of dialogue and negotiations with regional organizations in order to achieve a broader, more effective and more comprehensive consensus for the appropriate approach to reform and renewal.

Despite the initiatives and the relentless efforts of members of the Gulf Cooperation Council during the past few years to contain the devastating effects of the conflicts in the Arab Gulf region, which has great importance to regional and international strategies, and their continuing endeavour to support progress towards joint reconstruction and cooperation, the unstable political and security conditions in the region remain a source of concern for us. Such a situation therefore requires the establishment of a balance based on a firm political will to support all regional arrangements aimed at eliminating the causes of conflict and situations of occupation. It also requires building bridges for multilateral cooperation, at both the bilateral and the collective level, on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence, confidence-building, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, mutual respect for regional sovereignties and the resolution of disputes by peaceful means rather than the use of force, in accordance with the rules of international law and the Charters of both the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

The continued occupation since 1971 by the Islamic Republic of Iran of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — is a major issue to which we and the other States of the region attach great importance. That occupation constitutes a source of constant tension, concern and instability in the region, particularly as the Iranian Government persists in changing the historic, legal and demographic character of the islands by constructing military and civilian installations and building bases on them. Examples of such measures are the construction of a branch of Bayan An-Nour University and two airports on the occupied islands of Abu Musa and Greater Tunb. Iran has also resorted to repeated military exercises conducted in the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, including those off the three islands, thus continuing to consolidate its occupation of the islands, persisting in its provocative policy and imposing a fait accompli by force. All this is in complete disregard of the dangerous consequences of this policy for the future and the territorial integrity of the region and for the aspirations of its peoples to peace, stability and the achievement of sustainable development.

The United Arab Emirates expresses grave concern about all such illegal actions and practices, which not only constitute a flagrant violation of its territorial integrity and an infringement of its national rights, but are also contradictory to the peaceful inclinations of the States of the region and the world at large. We therefore renew our call to the Islamic Government of Iran to fulfil its legal and political obligations and undo all its unilateral actions in the three Emirates islands. This would prove that its intentions were good and give credence to its stated policy, especially given certain recent statements by some Iranian officials calling for the resolution of existing disputes through peaceful means and expressing their desire to establish stability and security in the region.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the new Iranian Government and its declared orientation, especially with regard to the promotion of good-neighbourly relations, the elimination of tensions and the peaceful solution of disputes in the region. We hope that the Iranian Government will consider all our peaceful initiatives in a spirit of objectivity and cooperation. These initiatives have already been supported by sister, friendly and other States, and call either for serious bilateral negotiations, without preconditions, to be entered into, or for the dispute to be submitted to the International Court of Justice.

Resorting to policies of violence and force, stockpiling banned weapons and using terrorism to deal with the concerns about the political and security balance in the region must not become an alternative to dialogue or to efforts to bolster the mechanisms for building peace and achieving the economic and social development of the countries of the region. For this reason, we support all measures taken by the States of the region to protect their sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

We stress the importance of full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq and consider that the suffering of the Iraqi people should be dealt with within the framework of implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995).

We also urge the Iraqi Government to carry out in full all its legal obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially those dealing with the release of all prisoners of war and detainees who are citizens of Kuwait and other countries, and the restitution of Kuwaiti property.

The peace process in the Middle East is at a perilous juncture as a result of Israeli Government policies reneging on most of its obligations with regard to the peace process and the principle of land for peace, which are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Such policies constitute a flagrant violation of humanitarian law, international legitimacy and the accords concluded between the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel, as do the ensuing serious actions, including the expansion of illegal settler activities in Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, particularly in Jerusalem; the expropriation of Palestinian lands and the demolition of houses; resort to alleged security reasons in order to carry out measures of collective punishment; and the imposition of an economic blockade.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns all such irresponsible Israeli policies and actions, and reiterates the importance of continuing the peace process as the only alternative for the stability and security of that region, regardless of the obstacles and challenges it is facing. It calls upon the international community, especially the United Nations, and the sponsors of the peace process to shoulder their legal, political, historical and humanitarian responsibilities.

We welcome the efforts of the Secretary of State of the United States of America during her recent tour of the region and hope that she will continue her endeavours to ensure that the Palestinian-Israeli accords are implemented and that negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks are resumed on the basis of the principle of land for peace and the inadmissibility of unilateral actions that would only prejudice the final phase of the negotiations. We also commend the tireless efforts of the countries of the European Union to persuade the Israeli Government to reverse its policy and seriously abide by all of its commitments in the context of the peace accords and international legality, in a manner that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights to self-determination, repatriation and the establishment of their independent State on their national soil, with Jerusalem its capital.

In the same context, and given that the other Arab parties adhere to the peace process as a sine qua non strategic objective strategy, the Israeli Government must make a similarly serious commitment to end its occupation of, and repeated attacks against, the territory of Lebanon in implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and to resume unconditional negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks so as to ensure its full withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967, as well as from southern Lebanon and the west of the Bekaa valley.

The requirements of security, stability and a just and lasting peace in the region are urgent not only for Israel, but for all the countries of that region. Consequently, we emphasize the inalienable right of peoples to resist occupation and aggression and condemn all forms of terrorism, whether they are aimed against individuals or practised by States, because terrorism has a direct impact in undermining regional and international stability and security. We also regard the stockpiling of banned weapons and the threat of their use against other States as another dangerous manifestation of terrorism. We therefore urge the international community and the relevant international organizations to make effective efforts to render the region of the Middle East and the Arab Gulf a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and to demand that Israel accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and comply with the international control and safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Efforts by the United Nations and the regional organizations to deal with national and regional tensions and conflicts, as well as with the concomitant destruction of development infrastructure and human suffering in some developing countries, have not resulted in the containment of the causes or extent of such conflicts. In the European continent, for example, manifestations of tension and ethnic and racial bias still persist among some factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a result of the continued pursuit by certain Bosnian Serbs of policies that conflict with the peaceful solutions of the Dayton peace accords. There are also situations of tension, insecurity and conflict battering parts of the continents of Asia and Africa, such as Afghanistan, Somalia, the Great Lakes region and other areas. It is therefore imperative that more effective international and regional efforts be made in order to find peaceful and objective solutions to those conflicts. We also call upon the parties directly concerned to work and cooperate with efforts and endeavours designed to contain such situations in order to achieve peace and stability at the national and regional levels.

The first positive results achieved by globalization, development and the growth of world trade have not met the expectations of countries in advancing and strengthening their development or environmental and

social policies. This is particularly true in the developing and least developed regions that continue to suffer from the spread of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, as well as the burden of foreign debts, in addition to fluctuations in the rates of exchange and several other problems.

The creation of an equitable and just economic environment built on a foundation of cooperation requires joint efforts by developing countries on the one hand, and by developing and developed countries on the other. We must also take into consideration the special requirements of the least developed countries, in particular by increasing, rather than decreasing, official assistance to them and by lifting existing trade barriers and economic obstacles. This would contribute to a sharing of common responsibilities and interests among them. We also support all efforts aimed at promoting and enhancing the role of regional and international development organizations, at the forefront of which are the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and others, each within its own mandate, in the implementation of a global strategy for comprehensive development.

In seeking to enhance its participation in such regional and international institutions, the United Arab Emirates, thanks to the wise guidance of its Head of State, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, has achieved a qualitative and quantitative leap in the developmental, economic, social, environmental and human fields in the past two decades. It contributed, to a large degree, to the expansion of the bases for investment, commerce, industry and the liberalization of trade. It therefore continued to provide development assistance to the developing and least developed countries, including, for example, humanitarian assistance and concessional loans provided by the Abu Dhabi Development Fund, the Zayed Benevolent Society and other multipurpose humanitarian institutions. Within the framework of our commitment to enhancing the contribution of the private sector in supporting the activities of the United Nations, we are pleased to announce that we shall be hosting a conference on the role of the private sector in supporting the United Nations, which is scheduled to be held in the Emirate of Dubai in mid-October. That will be in line with our policy of continuing to hold a series of multifaceted regional and international conferences and exhibitions in the cultural, social, economic, political and environmental fields. All these are regarded as complementing the United Nations efforts in the various areas of sustainable development.

In conclusion, I should like to stress the need to adopt values of security, peace and freedom as the formula for attaining a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive view of the issues of our common destiny. Let us, then, unite our efforts in building a world based on respect for the rule of law and justice, a world where peace, tolerance, prosperity and progress reign supreme.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.